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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council calls on Tajik parties to extend current cease-fire agreement; stresses need for substantive progress at fourth round of inter-Tajik talks in Almaty.

+ Commission of Inquiry concludes Kibeho tragedy was not result of planned action by Rwandan authorities to kill certain group of people, nor was it unpreventable accident.

+ Secretary-General and United States Secretary of Defense review United Nations peace-keeping operations; discuss proposed changes in role and deployment of peace-keepers in former Yugoslavia.

+ Special Representative Akashi says Croatian Army is complying in general terms with direction to remove troops from Zone of Separation; total withdrawal is only way to further stabilize volatile situation.

+ UNPROFOR reports decrease in military activity in Sarjevo; UNHCR food convoy reaches Bihac after six-week break.

+ Internal auditors from United Nations and multilateral financial institutions to begin twenty-sixth meeting at Headquarters on Monday.

+ United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues to be held in Nagasaki from 12 to 16 June.

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The Security Council today called on the Tajik Government and opposition to substantially extend the Cease-fire Agreement of 17 September 1994. In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimee (France), the Council also called on them to achieve substantive progress during the fourth round of inter-Tajik talks, which will begin in Almaty on 22 May. It stressed the need for progress on fundamental institutional issues and consolidation of the statehood of Tajikistan, as defined in the agenda agreed upon in Moscow last month.

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The Council expressed concern over the actions of both sides in the past three months, which posed obstacles to the peace process. The parties must resolve the conflict and confirm, by taking practical steps, their commitment to achieve national reconciliation through peaceful political means on the basis of mutual concessions and compromises.

The Council noted the Secretary-General's observation in his report of 12 May that grounds existed for continuing United Nations efforts and maintaining the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). It also recalled its view that extension of the cease-fire was necessary for that.

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The tragedy at the Kibeho camp last month was not the result of a planned action by the Rwandan authorities to kill a certain group of people, according to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. However, in a report issued in Kigali, the Commission said the killings were not an unpreventable accident. It concluded that unarmed internally displaced persons had been subjected to "arbitrary deprivation of life" in violation of human rights and humanitarian law committed by Rwandan military personnel. Such violations had also been committed by armed elements among the internally displaced persons themselves.

The report recognized the legitimate interests of the Rwandan Government and of the international community to have the displaced persons camps closed, for reasons of national security and to facilitate recovery from last year's genocide. It recognized the efforts made by the United Nations and the Government to keep the situation at Kibeho under control. However, it also expressed regret that United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations had not been able to contribute more efficiently to the speedy evacuation of displaced persons from the camp.

The Commission called on the Rwandan authorities to carry out an analysis of the mistakes made in the closure of the camps, and an impartial investigation of individual responsibilities within its armed forces for any other factors which might have contributed to the tragedy. High priority should be given to improving the capability of State and local authorities to react adequately and within the internationally recognized framework of human rights and of humanitarian law to situations of social tension. The Commission recommended that the international community continue encouraging and assisting Rwanda in its efforts to achieve justice, national reconciliation and reconstruction.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met today at Headquarters with United States Secretary of Defense William Perry and, along with their aides, reviewed United Nations peace-keeping operations. Mr. Perry expressed his continuing support for the Organization and its peace-keeping efforts.

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The Secretary-General and the Defense Secretary focused on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, according to a United Nations spokesman. They discussed proposed changes in the role and deployment of the peace-keepers there, and the role of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air power in support of United Nations operations. They also dealt with the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and agreed that the transition from the Multinational Force had been smooth and that the operation was going well.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi today reported that the Croatian Army was complying in general terms with the Security Council's direction that it remove its troops from the Zone of Separation. However, he pointed out that some 760 Croatian soldiers and 50 special police remained in the Zone, and urged that the withdrawal be completed without delay.

Mr. Akashi noted "a positive desire at the Government level" to respond to the Council's wishes, although that desire had not been uniformly reflected on the ground. While there had been a further withdrawal from Sector North today, the Croatian Army maintained a heavy presence just outside the Zone in Sector South, and a small one at key positions within. He said total withdrawal was the only way to restore the integrity of the cease-fire agreement and to further stabilize a volatile situation. The Government should honour its commitment to the common goal of an end to the fighting and a peaceful search for a negotiated solution.

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There has been a considerable decrease in military activity in Sarjevo, a United Nations spokesman said today. There was some heavy-weapon and tank firing in parts of the city, but the airport remained open and handled four United Nations flights today. However, both Bosnian parties continued to impose restrictions on the movement of United Nations personnel between the city and the airport, and to prevent the rotation of peace-keepers at observation posts.

Meanwhile, fighting continued around Bihac, and the town was again shelled from Bosnian Serb positions, the spokesman reported. A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) food convoy reached the pocket after a break of six weeks, although soldiers loyal to Fikret Abdic forced it to leave around 24 metric tons of food in Velika Kladusa.

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The twenty-sixth meeting of Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations Organizations and Multilateral Financial Institutions will begin at Headquarters on Monday. Heads of Audit Services from 29 organizations will attend the three-day gathering, which will be addressed by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations, Karl Paschke, will host and chair the meeting. He will also deliver a keynote speech on the role of his recently established office. Mr. Paschke has launched a major effort to increase the impact and clout of internal control mechanisms at the United Nations.

Meeting participants will discuss a wide range of topics, including the emerging role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services; development of an effect system of accountability and responsibility; auditing aspects of United Nations peace-keeping missions, procurement and inventory policies; and ways of increasing cooperation among oversight bodies of the United Nations system.

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"Disarmament in the last half century and its future prospects" will be the main theme of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, to be held in Nagasaki, Japan, from 12 to 16 June. It will be opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding.

Hosted by the Prefecture and City of Nagasaki and financed by the Government of Japan, the Conference is being convened by the United Nations Centre for Disarmament Affairs through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Participants will review the progress made by the international community in the field of arms control and disarmament, and search for common approaches to setting new priorities for the future.

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